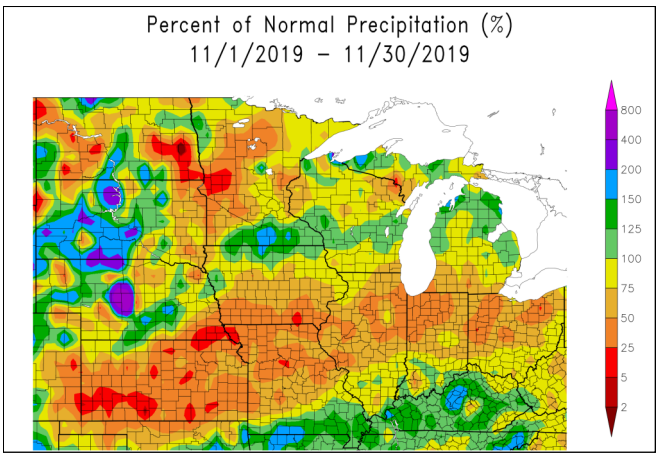
USDA Midwest Climate Hub
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

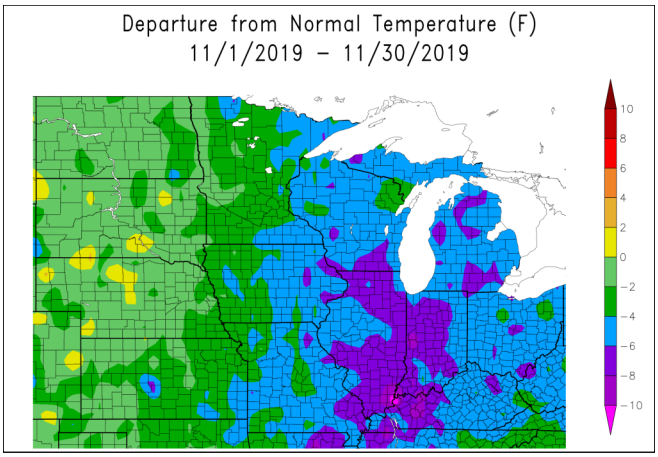
December 2, 2019

Midwest Ag-Focus Climate Outlook

Current Conditions

Several winter storms dropped large snowfalls over the Northern Plains and Upper Midwest around Thanksgiving leading to severe travel issues and capturing most of the media attention. The wetness issues surrounding them (rain or snow) also continued to slow harvest. Conditions across much of the Midwest/Northern Plains over the last 30 days have been drier than average. The wet areas were mainly impacted by the recent storm systems. Less than 50% of average precipitation occurred in a band from Kansas to Ohio and northern areas. Mostly colder-than-average temperatures dominated the region with the most severe area in the east where temperatures were 5-10°F colder than average. The plains were mostly colder, though just slightly.





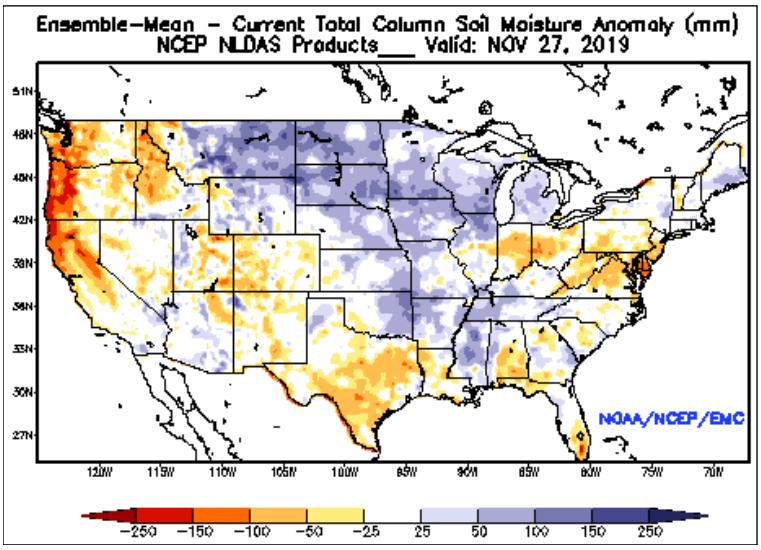
Images from High Plains Regional Climate Center (HPRCC), Online Data Services: ACIS Climate Maps. Generated: 12/2/2019

Impacts

Harvest continued to move along slowly with multiple issues causing problems (wet fields and/or grain, propane shortages, etc.) though the recent dryness has helped. Most soybeans have been harvested throughout the region as of Nov 24. Corn was farther behind with the northern states the worst off. Very wet grain has increased drying cost and led to spot propane shortages.

Wetness has slowed additional fall field work with wetter-than-average soils over all but the eastern Corn Belt. Soils have bounced around freezing in northern areas causing additional slowdowns where fields were too wet to harvest before freezing. Currently soils are near freezing from North Dakota into southern South Dakota. The large snows have led to added issues slowing additional harvest.

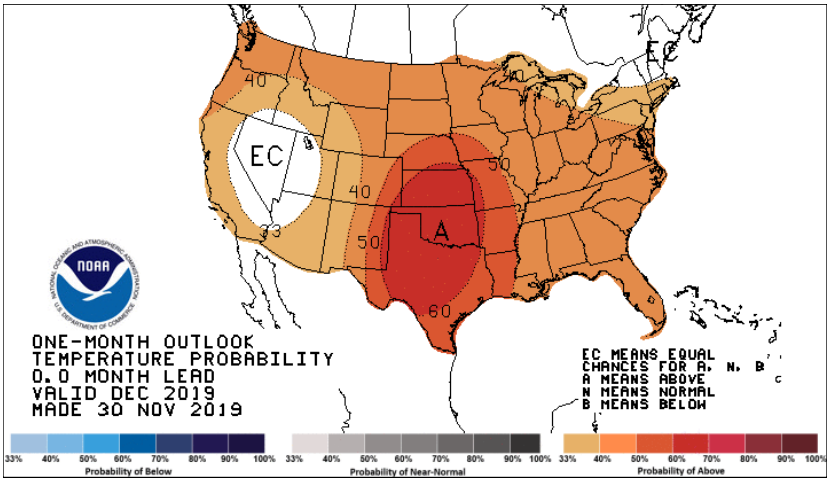
Harvest attempts are likely to continue at a slow rate. Large numbers of acres of corn (and possibly even some beans) will not get harvested until spring.

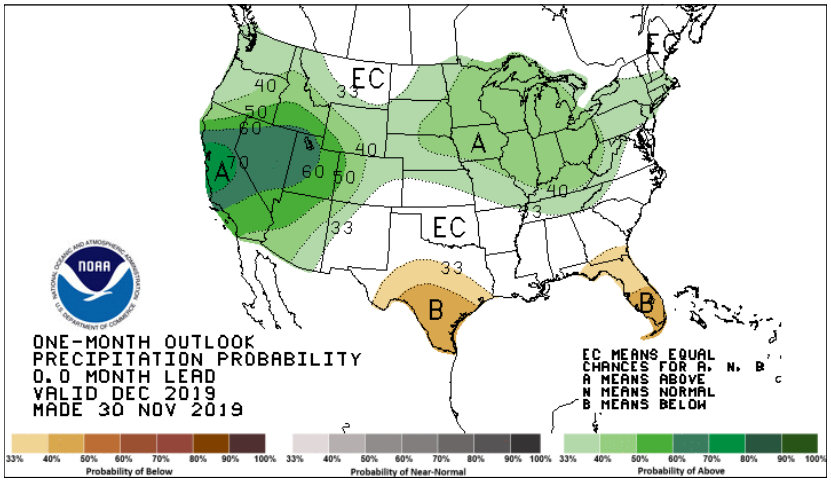


NLDAS Drought Monitor Soil Moisture

Outlook

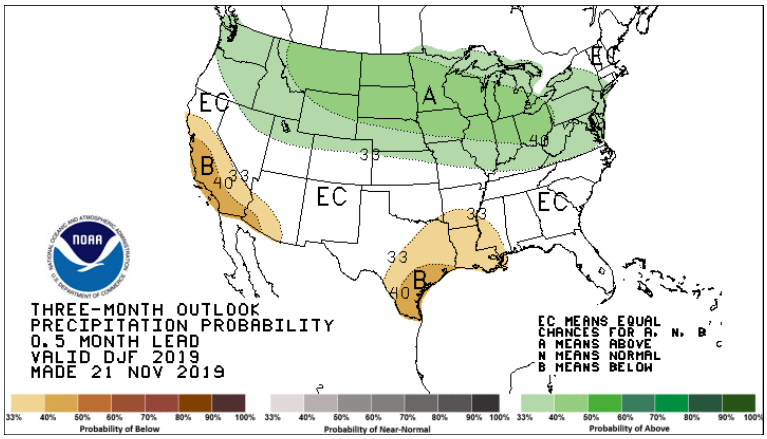
The updated December outlooks from NOAA's Climate Prediction Center have some mixed news for agriculture in the region. The whole region has an increased chance of above average temperatures. Nearly the whole region also has slightly increased chances for above average precipitation for the month. This combination is likely to lead to additionally muddy conditions for any harvest or for livestock through the month. Whether the precipitation falls frozen or as liquid will depend on storm to storm situations.

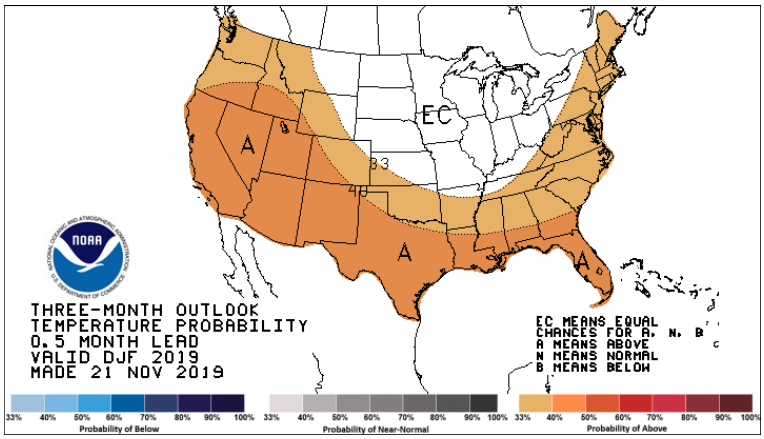




Looking in to the rest of the winter, there are increased chances of turning colder than average later in the winter into early spring. Average coldest temperatures occur in mid-late January. But the outlook could extend the time of the coldest temperatures. The possibly more concerning issue is slightly above average chances for precipitation over much of the region extending into spring. **With already wet soils, spring field work and planting delays are a distinct possibility with concerns for spring flooding in low-lying areas.**

3-Month Outlook

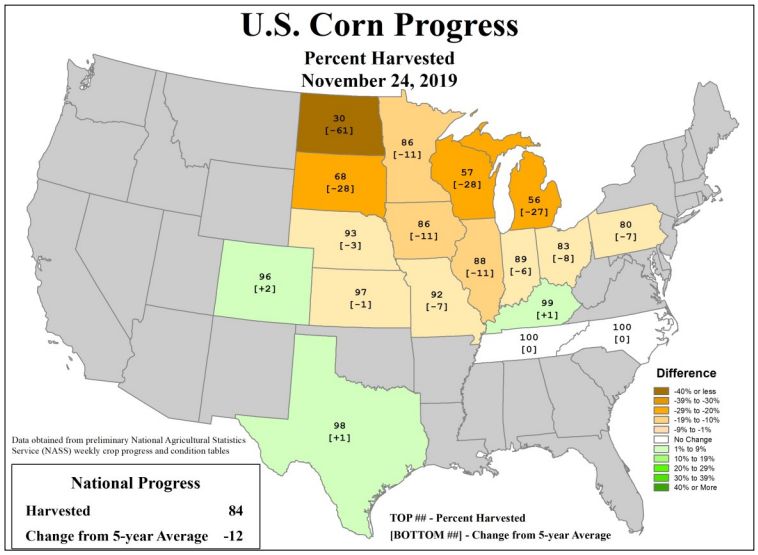


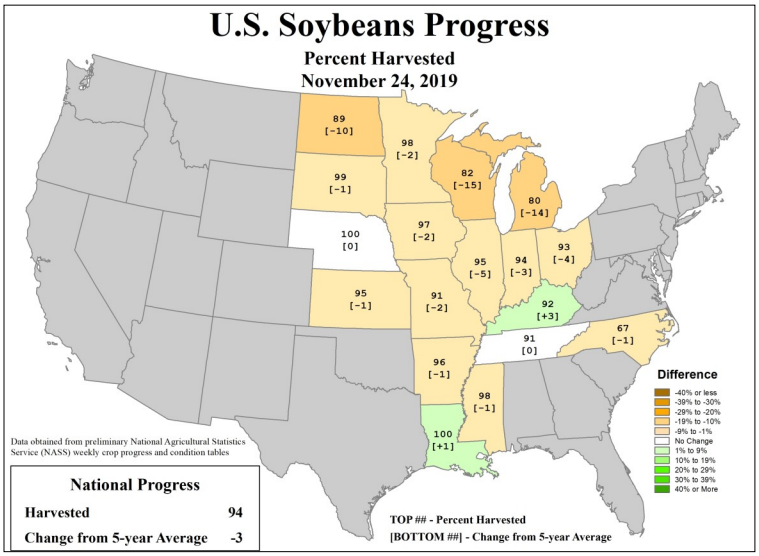


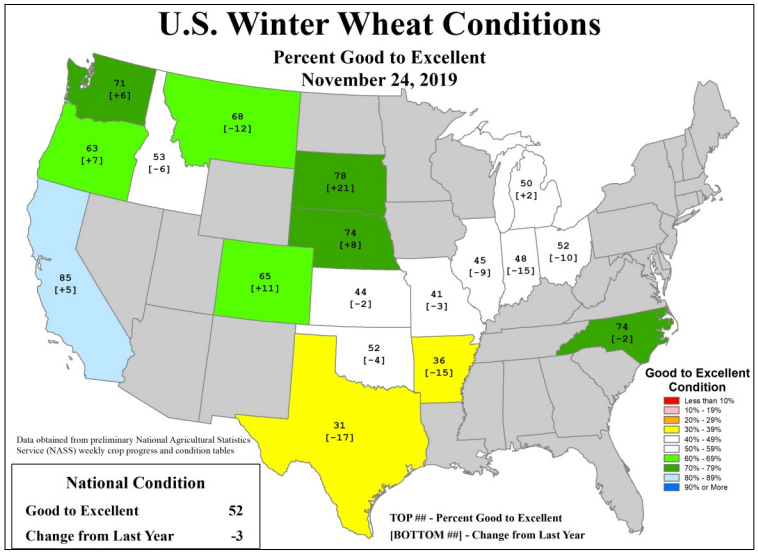
Climate Prediction Center

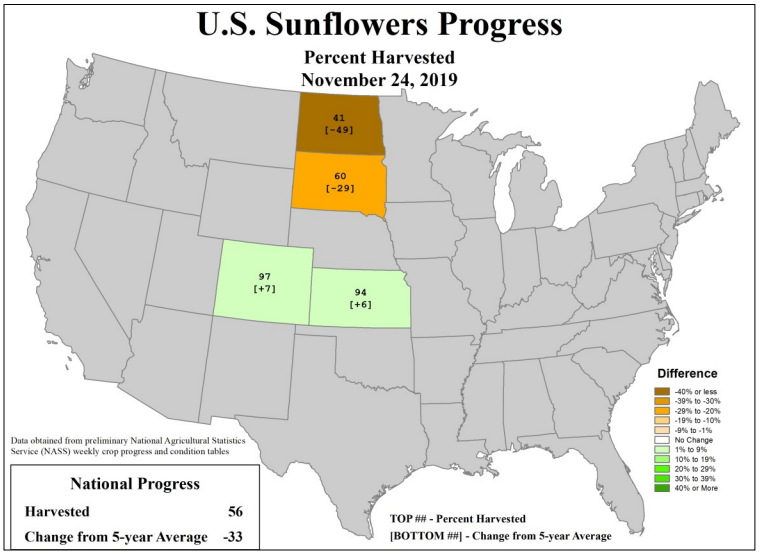
Midwest Ag-Focus Climate Outlook

Crop Progress









For more on the North-Central U.S. Agricultural Update, select here.

U.S. Agriculture Progress Maps Supplied by Brad Rippey, USDA World Agricultural Outlook Board.

Partners and Contributors

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
Climate Prediction Center (CPC)
National Weather Service (NWS)
National Center for Environmental Information (NCEI)
National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC)
National Integrated Drought Information System (NIDIS)
Midwestern Regional Climate Center (MRCC)
Midwest State Climatologists
High Plains Regional Climate Center (HPRCC)

For More Information

Charlene Felkley, Coordinator
USDA Midwest Climate Hub
1015 N University Blvd., Ames, IA 50011
515-294-0136
charlene.felkley@ars.usda.gov